

## State vows to minimize I-15 project aggravation

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OGDEN -- The Utah Department of Transportation has promised businesses it will do everything possible to keep things running smoothly during a three-year Interstate 15 reconstruction project beginning next spring.

Even though the project doesn't have a contractor yet, Brent DeYoung, UDOT project manager, assured the 40-plus people at a public hearing Thursday night that ramp and lane closures will be held to a minimum.

The project will add two lanes in both directions from the merge of Interstates 84 and 15 through 12th Street in Ogden, effectively doubling the capacity through that area.

Construction will begin in spring 2006 and is expected to be completed by fall 2008.

DeYoung told the group that UDOT was able to do six months of work in two months the last time construction was done in the area, but it required major closures that aggravated traffic and the public.

"The public wasn't happy," he said. "Although we thought we were doing a good job, you didn't."

So this time, strict instructions on closures have been set for contractors bidding on the project, such as charging \$4,000 for each day a ramp is closed. The "ramp rental" means the more days contractors estimate they'll need to close a ramp to rebuild it, their bid automatically rises by \$4,000 per day.

The \$180 million project is funded by the Centennial Highway Fund and was designated to cover from the freeway merge to 2700 North in Pleasant View. However, the rising cost of construction materials, gas and oil has limited the scope of the project, much to the dismay and frustration of Rep. Brad Dee, R-Ogden, who attended the gathering.

"We're going to get it (to 2700 North)," Dee said. "We just sent \$30 million south to Utah County to help with a freeway project they desperately needed. We supported that. We expect and we certainly hope we get that same kind of support from them."

DeYoung assured Dee that UDOT would construct as far as the money would let them. Bids are due by the end of October, when UDOT officials will have a better idea of how much \$180 million can cover.

Koreann Rael, owner and manager of the Western Inn on 12th Street, attended the meeting for some reassurance that the construction will be managed in a way for customers to find the motel. Rael was still unsure when she left.

"I guess I expected a little more -- like what section will be done first," she said. "(The construction) is a good thing and a bad thing. I know we need it, but some of the motels are struggling as it is."

UDOT will have a hotline and regular fax or e-mail updates for those interested. More information on the project can be found at [www.udot.utah.gov/i15now](http://www.udot.utah.gov/i15now).